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INCORE
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28 May 1998

Our Ref: LM/cs

Mr Tim O'Connor
DFA
Iveagh House
Dublin
Ireland

Received 9.6.98. JB

Dear Mr O'Connor

DEALING WITH THE PAST:
RECONCILIATION PROCESSES AND PEACE BUILDING - 8-9 JUNE 1998

INCORE, the Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity, is organising an international conference on Dealing with the Past: Reconciliation Processes and Peace-building, in the Holiday Inn Hotel, Belfast, on the 8 and 9 June 1998". A draft outline of the programme is enclosed, along with some background notes on the rationale for the event.

The forthcoming conference, initiated in Northern Ireland, arose out of the desire to learn from other societies coming out of violence about the measures and mechanisms that can be employed to address the legacy of a society's violent past. Questions surrounding the issues of remembering, healing, amnesty, reparation and peace-building have great potency for all victims of the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland, whether they be the families and friends of the dead, the injured and their families, or prisoners and their families.

We hope to address these questions and many others during the INCORE conference on the 8 and 9 June. Mary Burton of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission will make a keynote presentation on the Monday evening which will be open to members of the public, but participation in Tuesday's proceedings must, for reasons of space, be by invitation only. We do hope that you will be able to attend the conference, and that you will return the enclosed acceptance form, **clearly indicating which workshop you would like to attend**. If you know of any group or individual whom you feel should receive an invitation and who may not already be included in our invitation list, please do not hesitate to let us know as we wish to make the conference as inclusive as possible.

Yours sincerely

pp Gillian Robinson
Research Director, INCORE

Encs

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DEALING WITH THE PAST: RECONCILIATION PROCESSES AND PEACE BUILDING - 8-9 JUNE 1998

Background to the conference

The forthcoming conference, initiated in Northern Ireland by INCORE and Brandon Hamber, of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, arose out of the desire to learn from other societies coming out of violence about the measures and mechanisms that can be employed to address the legacy of a society's violent past. Since 1969, 3,600 people have been killed in Northern Ireland and the official estimate of over 40,000 people injured is likely to under-represent the physical impact of the ongoing violence over the last 28 years. No statistics on the numbers of political prisoners and their families cover the full period of the "Troubles". Deaths and injuries have been concentrated in certain geographical areas - North and West Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and the border regions, and in certain occupational groups - the police and security forces. In communities severely affected by the violence, the physical and emotional well-being of people has been compromised, and fear, anger and suspicion are features of community life. Many have a sense of injustice and a loss of trust in authority, and many live with the long term effects of militarisation, bereavement and injury. resulting in incalculable effects on victims' families.

All discussions about "victims" of violent conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, South Africa and Latin America, as well as that in Northern Ireland, run the risk of becoming caught up in the same political conflict that caused the casualties in the first place. Acknowledgment of the damage done to a particular grouping or community can seem to some as an admission of defeat, which may gladden their enemies, and so is to be avoided. Conversely, acknowledgment of such damage can be a way of highlighting the wickedness of those attack them, and therefore proof of the worthiness of their cause. Issues of justice, forgiveness, amnesty, apology, compensation and remorse can be manipulated and used as political weapons. Any initiative in this area carries a heavy emotional charge, and those injured and bereaved have often been used to further political agendas, sometimes at the expense of their own welfare. This runs the risk of compounding the damage done to those who have been hurt, and illustrates the crucial importance that all discussion about "victims" or people affected is shifted onto a humanitarian basis, based on an inclusive concern about the human needs and the resources required to meet them, as part of the process of peace-building. Yet how can this be achieved in a society coming out of armed conflict, where little or no sense of inclusion, or common goals exists in the society as a whole?

In the context particularly of Northern Ireland and the Middle East, the maintenance of a relative absence of violence has been found to be crucial to the task of addressing the situation of those affected by the violence. A return to violence makes it virtually impossible to address the issue of truth, reconciliation and dealing with the past.

Any measures and initiatives seem to face the need to develop a clear understanding that the losses sustained by many people are often irrecoverable, and that no measure or compensation can possibly make good that loss. Everything that we can do is destined to be inadequate. We cannot bring back the dead, restore the maimed, or turn the clock back. Should measures therefore be based on principles of meeting existing and future need rather on the principles of restorative justice?

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REPLY SLIP

I Name: ..... Organisation/Group: .....
will/will not* be able to attend the conference on

DEALING WITH THE PAST:
RECONCILIATION PROCESSES AND PEACE BUILDING

on 8th June ☐ 9th June ☐ or both ☐

Please indicate in which of the following workshops you wish to participate, marking **three** in order of preference. It is our intention to run only the six most popular workshops. Should one topic prove to be overwhelmingly oversubscribed, two workshops will cover the same topic, however, if a number of participants suggest a workshop topic which we have overlooked, that may prove to be one of the sessions on the day. The choices are as follows:

1. Religion, Spirituality and Remembering ☐
2. Physical symbols and artistic expressions ☐
3. The issue of compensation/reparation ☐
4. Children and Remembering ☐
5. Trauma and individual healing ☐
6. Legal remedies and prosecutions ☐
7. Rebuilding the Social Fabric of Communities ☐
8. Who owns history? ☐
9. An alternative suggestion ..... ☐

Please complete and return to : Lyn Moffett, INCORE, Aberfoyle House, Northland Road, Derry/Londonderry, BT48 7JA, Northern Ireland, UK. Tel: + 01504 375507 Fax: 01504 375510 Email: lyn@incore.ulst.ac.uk **by Friday, 29 May 1998.**

* Delete as applicable

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DEALING WITH THE PAST: RECONCILIATION PROCESSES AND PEACE BUILDING

In the Holiday Inn Conference Centre, University Street, Belfast

DRAFT PROGRAMME

MONDAY, 8 JUNE

8.00PM	**KEYNOTE SPEECH** Mary Burton, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, South Africa Chair: Adrian Guelke, Queen's University, Belfast

TUESDAY 9 JUNE

9.00	Registration
9.30	Welcome and Introductions Mari Fitzduff, Director, INCORE
9.40 -11.00	**SESSION 1** **SHOULD WE REMEMBER?** Everyone wants to speak the truth but no-one wants to hear it everyone wants others to "confess" but there is a short queue of those wishing to confess. How do people move throught the experience of victimhood towards being able to acknowledge the victim-hood of others and their responsibilities? Chair: Elizabeth Meehan, Queen's University, Belfast Speakers: Mary Burton , TRC, South Africa Robert Cabrera (Human Rights Office of the Archdioces of Guatemala) Marie Smyth, Cost of the Troubles Study
11.00 - 11.15	Coffee
11.15 -12.30	**SESSION 2** **HOW SHOULD WE REMEMBER?** Chair: Felicity McCartney, NIVT Speakers: Brandon Hamber, CSVR, South Africa Kenneth Bloomfield, NI Commission for Victims
12.30-1.30	**LUNCH**
1.30 - 2.45	**SMALL GROUP WORKSHOPS:** **Please refer to the letter of invitation, which explains how the six workshops will be chosen.**

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1. Religion, Spirituality and Remembering
2. Physical symbols and artistic expressions
3. The issue of compensation/reparation
4. Children and Remembering
5. Trauma and individual healing
6. Legal remedies and prosecutions
7. Rebuilding the Social Fabric of Communities
8. Who owns history?

2.45 - 3.15	Facilitators meet to plan final session Coffee
3.15 - 4.45	**PLENARY** Facilitators report to conference, with the opportunity for questions from the floor to both workshop participants and a panel of our international speakers
4.45	Conclusions and Summing Up Adrain Guelke and Sue Williams

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